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Space Systems Command successfully launches Space Test Program-3 mission

LOS ANGELES AIR FORCE BASE, Calif. – The U.S. Space Force's Space Systems Command and its mission partners successfully launched the Space Test Program (STP)-3 mission from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station's Space Launch Complex-41 Dec. 7 at 5:19 a.m. Eastern (2:19 a.m. Pacific). First contact has been made successfully with the Space Test Program Satellite (STPSat)-6 and Long Duration Propulsive ESPA (LDPE)-1 spacecraft.

"STP-3's successful launch and acquisition is a remarkable achievement for the entire team," said Col. Brian Denaro, Program Executive Officer for Space Development. "This mission advances military and civil experimentation objectives by demonstrating next generation space technologies in nuclear detonation detection, space situational awareness, weather, and communication by providing critical data needed to reduce risk for future space programs. It's the perfect example of how SSC is collaborating to bring exciting new space capabilities to the Space Force, our mission partners, and the warfighters we support."

STPSat-6, the primary spacecraft on STP-3, hosts nine payloads and is managed by the Space Test Program division. The nine payloads integrated onto STPSat-6 include Space and Atmospheric Burst Reporting System (SABRS)-3, the primary payload on STPSat-6 developed by the U.S. Department of Energy and the National Nuclear Security Administration, the National

Aeronautics and Space Agency's Laser Communications Relay Demonstration (LCRD) payload, and seven experimental payloads manifested after being assessed and prioritized by the Department of Defense's Space Experiment Review Board. These payloads allow the United States and its partners to stay ahead of threats in space by delivering improved nuclear detonation detection capabilities and demonstrating new space technologies in the areas of space domain awareness, weather, and laser communication. STP has contracted with Northrop Grumman as the primary spacecraft contractor, and is operated from NASA's White Sands Complex in Las Cruces, New Mexico.

LDPE-1 is the rideshare spacecraft on STP-3 and is the first mission in the LDPE series to be launched; LDPE-2 will launch on USSF-44 and LDPE-3A will launch on USSF-67. The SSC Development Corps' Rapid Development Division manages the LDPE program with a matrixed LDPE-1 team composed of STP personnel. The LDPE program provides modular, flexible features that, when combined with available launch opportunities, create a "freight train to space" for experiments and prototypes in geosynchronous Earth orbit. By rapidly placing multiple, diverse experimental payloads into orbit, the LDPE program provides critical data to aid in the development of future Space Force programs.

LDPE-1 hosts payloads that will advance technology concerning communications, space weather sensing, and space domain awareness. The LDPE spacecraft is operated by the SSC Development Corps' Prototype Operations Division at the Research, Development, Test and Evaluation Support Complex (RSC) at Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico.

The Atlas V Launch Vehicle has successfully placed 48 of 48 National Security Space vehicles into their designated orbits. Today's launch marks the 88th National Security Space

Launch, and the 36th Atlas V launch from SLC-41 at Cape Canaveral Space Force Station, Florida. This is the second launch of an Atlas V with the new Northrop Grumman-built Graphite Epoxy Motor 63 strap on solid rocket boosters, and a preview of the larger GEM 63XL boosters that will be used on future Vulcan Centaur launch vehicles.

"We are proud to once again successfully launch a critical National Security Space mission, proving again that our industry and government team is the best at what we do." said Col. Robert Bongiovi, director of SSC's Launch Enterprise. "Through our rigorous Mission Assurance process, we are continuing our record of success in safely placing experimental and operational satellites into orbit for our mission partners."

Space Systems Command is the U.S. Space Force field command responsible for rapidly identifying, prototyping and fielding resilient space capabilities for joint warfighters. SSC delivers sustainable joint space warfighting capabilities to defend the nation and its allies while disrupting adversaries in the contested space domain. SSC mission areas include launch acquisition and operations; space domain awareness; positioning, navigation and timing; missile warning; satellite communication; and cross-mission ground, command and control and data.

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A United Launch Alliance (ULA) Atlas V rocket carrying the Space Test Program (STP)-3 mission for U.S. Space Force lifts off from Space Launch Complex-41 at 5:19 a.m. EDT on Dec. 7, 2021. (Photo Credit: United Launch Alliance)

A United Launch Alliance Atlas V rocket lifts off Dec. 7, 2021, from Space Launch Complex-41 at Cape Canaveral Space Force Station, Fla. The rocket propelled two Department of Defense Space Test Program satellites into space. (U.S. Space Force photo by Joshua Conti)

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